

ORDINARY SESSION 2022-2023

10 JUNE 2023

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**PARLIAMENT  
OF THE BRUSSELS-CAPITAL REGION**

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**RECOMMENDATIONS**  
**adopted by the deliberative committee**  
**responsible for making recommendations on urban noise**

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**SECTION 1**  
**EFFICIENCY**  
**Awareness, implementation and monitoring**

**Recommendation 1**

The deliberative committee responsible for making recommendations on urban noise (hereinafter the deliberative committee) recommends:

- incorporating its recommendations into the Government of the Brussels-Capital Region's general policy statement for the 2024-2029 legislature.

**Recommendation 2**

*Raise public awareness  
of the harmful effects of noise  
on health*

Whereas a large number of studies have highlighted the harmful effects of noise pollution, which is the second biggest environmental cause of morbidity; neither these studies nor these effects (stress, obesity, sleep disorders, cardiovascular disease, etc.) are known to the general public;

Whereas citizens are among the main producers of noise but are not necessarily aware of the consequences on their health and the associated financial costs;

Whereas the ['Quiet.Brussels'](#) plan is unknown to the general public;

Whereas many noise-related problems can be resolved through dialogue and mediation;

The deliberative committee recommends:

- 1) running awareness-raising campaigns through a variety of channels: social media, leafleting, schools, prevention services, community meetings, actions on the ground, etc;
- 2) better informing citizens about existing rules, such as regional, municipal and police regulations;
- 3) increasing the wealth of the super-diversity of Brussels by creating cultural spaces for mutual enrichment that improve understanding and tolerance of one another and, more specifically, in the areas of music, sound and noise.

**Recommendation 3**

*Strengthen traffic noise control  
and penalties for noise pollution*

Whereas noisy mopeds, motorbikes and cars, as well as street racing, disturb everyone;

Whereas the people of Brussels feel that there is hardly any control and very few penalties are imposed;

The deliberative committee recommends:

- 1) installing fixed or mobile noise radars in the priority areas defined by Brussels Environment;

- 2) adopting legislation and providing for stricter controls and penalties; drawing up specific regulations to enable Brussels Environment to combat emerging road noise;
- 3) setting up coordinated police actions and, in the event of an infringement, arranging for the vehicles concerned, including mopeds and motorbikes, to undergo roadworthiness tests;
- 4) requiring repeat offenders to perform community service in the form of training or helping to raise awareness.

#### **Recommendation 4**

*Develop a policy to combat  
noise pollution within the police force*

Whereas the people of Brussels believe that too little attention is currently being paid to identifying, raising awareness of, monitoring and punishing noise pollution; they also believe that the police may not have all the resources they need to implement an effective noise policy;

The deliberative committee recommends:

- 1) strengthening community policing (neighbourhood officers, cycle patrols, etc.);
- 2) focusing on noise training for the police, covering the effects on health, technical knowledge and expertise on noise, and raising awareness among the super-diverse population of Brussels;
- 3) appointing a noise officer who will receive even more specific training within the various police teams;
- 4) drawing up an inventory of the tools needed (techniques, expertise, knowledge, equipment, etc.) to develop a real policy to combat noise pollution within the police force;
- 5) encouraging the emergency services and police to use sirens sparingly.

#### **Recommendation 5**

*Evaluate the enforcement of existing rules in order to allocate appropriate budgetary resources to the noise  
pollution prevention and control policy*

Whereas existing measures are not always enforced;

Whereas before allocating budgets, it is important to examine what is preventing enforcement of the legislation and think about how to increase the effectiveness of the services;

The deliberative committee recommends:

- 1) evaluating the enforcement of existing rules ;
- 2) allocating appropriate budgetary resources to the noise pollution prevention and control policy on the basis of this evaluation to enable it to enforce the relevant measures.

## **Recommendation 6**

*Strengthen the technical and human resources of Brussels Environment,  
in particular by encouraging collaboration with police areas and other administrations*

Whereas Brussels Environment has considerable expertise in the management of environmental problems, including the fight against noise pollution;

Whereas close collaboration with police areas and other administrations could increase the effectiveness of both preventive operations and enforcement actions on the ground;

The deliberative committee recommends:

- 1) encouraging collaboration between Brussels Environment and police areas and other administrations, both for training in the fight against noise pollution and for actions on the ground (roadside checks, interventions on building sites, administrative penalties, etc.);
- 2) reallocating part of the regional budget to Brussels Environment to implement the noise pollution control policy.

## **SECTION 2**

### **REGIONAL PLANNING**

#### **Recommendation 7**

*Ensure acoustic comfort in buildings  
to improve quality of life*

Whereas the inadequacy of acoustic standards in the design of buildings and acoustic incentives to improve existing buildings;

The deliberative committee recommends:

- 1) setting and promoting acoustic performance criteria for new and existing buildings in the public and private sectors;
- 2) incorporating acoustic comfort criteria into regional planning regulations for construction and renovation projects subject to planning permission;
- 3) making it compulsory for construction and, wherever possible, building renovation projects subject to planning permission to include dual-aspect dwellings and quiet façades;
- 4) promoting the use of absorbent materials in regional town planning regulations, with particular emphasis on schools and sports facilities;
- 5) taking the acoustic dimension into account in energy, air and climate policies and tools;
- 6) training professionals (architects, contractors, etc.) in the use of good acoustic practice;
- 7) incorporating a 'noise' facilitator into the perspective.brussels school department.

#### **Recommendation 8**

*Give Homegrade greater resources  
to provide energy and  
acoustics advice on renovations*

Whereas property owners are required to carry out renovations to improve the energy performance of their properties;

Whereas property owners should also be able to get advice on improving the soundproofing of their property when information relating to planning permission is provided

The deliberative committee recommends:

- 1) estimating Homegrade's human and financial needs and assessing the results achieved by this association;
- 2) increasing Homegrade's human and financial resources on the basis of this estimate in order to strengthen the acoustic guidance system provided for in the 'Quiet.Brussels' plan (measure 28);
- 3) increasing the amount available in grants for soundproofing;
- 4) studying the possibility of introducing an acoustic performance certificate or incorporating acoustic performance into the energy performance certificate;

- 5) providing support to improve the acoustic performance of homes;
- 6) assessing the possibility of including acoustic criteria in the provisions of the Housing Code relating to rental property.

### **Recommendation 9**

*Create quiet areas as a priority  
in the areas most affected by noise  
(as recorded by Brussels Environment)  
to protect the health of residents*

Whereas the harmful effects of noise on health (stress, obesity, sleep disorders, cardiovascular disease, etc.);

Whereas the need for residents to benefit from noise-free refuge areas;

The deliberative committee recommends:

- 1) creating quiet areas in parks;
- 2) enabling every resident to have access to a quiet area within an acceptable walking distance of their home (for example, less than 500 metres).

### **Recommendation 10**

*Green the city  
to reduce the perception of noise*

Whereas the stress caused by noise;

Whereas vegetation limits the spread of noise (the more you plant, the less sound will be reflected back to residents) and has a soothing effect that counterbalances the stress caused by noise;

Whereas, in addition to this calming effect, there are other indirect effects such as improving biodiversity, quality of life and social cohesion within neighbourhoods;

The deliberative committee recommends:

- 1) greening public transport locations;
- 2) promoting the greening of façades;
- 3) installing acoustic walls wherever possible;
- 4) greening existing recreational and sports areas;
- 5) planting and maintaining vegetation wherever possible.

### **Recommendation 11**

*Proactively take  
the effects of noise pollution  
into account in urban planning policy*

Whereas noise cannot always be properly assessed when buying or renting a home;

The deliberative committee recommends:

- 1) drawing up regional and specific land-use plans, taking account of existing noise pollution and any other factors likely to generate noise;
- 2) taking noise pollution into account when processing applications for planning permission and operating permits through regional planning regulations;
- 3) providing better training for urban planning staff on these points, and improving cooperation between regional and municipal services.

### **Recommendation 12**

*Create dedicated areas  
for noisy activities*

Whereas residents can sometimes find it difficult to live with certain noisy activities;

Whereas this situation may generate noise pollution, leading to complaints and major investment in soundproofing;

Whereas economic and cultural activities that are noisy but essential to the fabric of the city are not sufficiently integrated;

The deliberative committee recommend :

- 1) assessing the potential of underground areas in Brussels (car parks, old underground stations, etc.), the canal area and other industrial areas to accommodate noisy economic activities and create attractive party areas while respecting community life;
- 2) reconciling different activities.

## **SECTION 3**

### **MOBILITY**

#### **Recommendation 13**

*Reduce mobility-related noise  
by promoting sustainable mobility*

Whereas various measures are already in place to encourage sustainable mobility and reduce car use;

Whereas the transition to sustainable mobility (walking and cycling) is creating challenges in terms of cohabitation and safety in certain areas that need to be anticipated;

Whereas it is necessary to rethink road layouts roads by dividing spaces between various users and reducing spaces for cars;

Whereas more sustainable mobility means fewer cars and therefore less noise;

The deliberative committee recommends:

- 1) strengthening existing measures by promoting park and ride facilities around Brussels and creating new park and ride facilities, particularly around stations in Wallonia and Flanders;
- 2) redeveloping roads, giving priority to off-street parking to offset parking spaces removed from the roads;
- 3) providing more cycle lanes separated from the rest of the traffic;
- 4) separating these cycle lanes from pedestrian areas wherever possible;
- 5) increasing the number of secure cycle parking facilities;
- 6) giving employers the option, possibly through grants, of leasing bicycles to their employees, including the low-paid;
- 7) developing the metro in the capital to reduce noise pollution from surface traffic;
- 8) preventing the calming of certain roads from creating new noise pollution on others.

#### **Recommendation 14**

##### *Finance the transition towards quieter deliveries*

Whereas citizens and shopkeepers buy goods, which involves deliveries;

Whereas these deliveries are made using vans and lorries on the streets of Brussels;

Whereas this generates noise and vibrations;

Whereas purchasing quieter delivery vehicles is one way of limiting this noise pollution;

The deliberative committee recommends:

- 1) increasing and extending funding to companies, through a fund, grants or tax reductions, for the purchase of less noisy delivery vehicles (electric or hydrogen-powered vehicles, cargo bikes, etc.);
- 2) reorganising urban logistics with several decentralised logistics centres so that, where possible, the last few kilometres can be covered by small electric vehicles (cargo bikes, etc.).

#### **Recommendation 15**

##### *Reduce the use of company cars*

Whereas the extent of traffic jams during rush hour, particularly due to the large number of company cars; these traffic jams are a source of noise;

Whereas a distinction should be made between cars that supplement the employee's salary and vehicles that are necessary for work purposes;

The deliberative committee recommends:

- 1) increasing the amount of incentives to give up cars that supplement the employee's income;
- 2) encouraging the government and employers to grant compensatory benefits to employees who give up a car that supplements



their salary;

- 3) encouraging working from home;
- 4) encouraging employers to promote the use of bicycles;
- 5) promoting the mobility budget.

### **Recommendation 16**

#### *Enforce 30 km/h speed limits for all types of transport*

Whereas current speed limits are often exceeded;

Whereas the 30 km/h speed limit does not apply to trams;

Whereas driving at over 30 km/h, particularly on narrow roads, generates noise and vibrations for local residents and homes;

The deliberative committee recommends :

- 1) strengthening speed prevention and control methods for all modes of transport and installing speed cushions in noisy areas where the 30 km/h limit is exceeded;
- 2) imposing a 30 km/h speed limit for trams, which will continue to have priority outside exclusive right-of-way areas on roads they share with other modes of transport.

### **Recommendation 17**

#### *Reduce the vibrations and noise generated by public transport*

The deliberative committee recommends:

- 1) taking measures as quickly as possible to combat the noise and vibrations suffered by residents and homes close to public transport lines, and including them in negotiations for the next management contracts for STIB, SNCB and Infrabel;
- 2) tasking an independent body with monitoring compliance with measures to limit vibrations and noise generated by public transport and including penalties in agreements between STIB, SNCB, Infrabel and Brussels Environment;
- 3) replacing the rolling stock that causes the most noise pollution with equipment better suited to the type of road and reducing the noise pollution generated;
- 4) leaving no stone unturned in choosing the rolling stock best suited to the roads involved when developing new lines or reorganising existing lines, in particular by studying the introduction of trolleybuses, bi-articulated electric buses, etc., in order to give priority above all to the well-being of residents through a significant reduction in noise and vibrations;
- 5) taking the issue of noise pollution into account in operational and investment decisions (equipment, gantry blocking warning signals, air conditioning, etc.) and taking compulsory measures in the acoustic black spots identified by Brussels Environment;

6) asking Infrabel to implement acoustic measures to protect homes close to railway tracks.

### **Recommendation 18**

#### *Create quiet areas on public transport*

Whereas the noise pollution generated by other passengers when talking loudly or listening to music through loudspeakers;

The deliberative committee recommends:

- 1) introducing quiet areas on metros and trains;
- 2) running awareness-raising campaigns for passengers;
- 3) putting up pictograms and digital signs and handing out leaflets;
- 4) raising awareness of the use of loudspeakers (telephones, speakers, etc.) on public transport.

## **SECTION 4**

### **LIVING TOGETHER**

#### **Recommendation 19**

#### *Reduce noise pollution on building sites in the public space*

Whereas the [order of 3 May 2018 on building sites on public roads](#), implementation of which is entrusted to Brussels Mobility, is not complied with and is not complete with regard to noise management on building sites;

Whereas citizens often suffer noise pollution due to building sites operating at inappropriate times of the year; in order to preserve peace and reduce stress for citizens, building sites should avoid or limit work at certain times of the year;

The deliberative committee recommends:

- 1) incorporating noise-reduction measures, such as the installation of noise-reduction devices and the requirement to use power tools, acoustic fences, site bubbles and less noisy construction techniques, into the order on building sites;
- 2) ensuring better coordination between various trades in order to improve efficiency and planning on building sites and reduce the duration of work;
- 3) ensuring that the duration of work is respected, failing which penalties will be imposed;
- 4) avoiding or limiting construction work at certain times of the year;
- 5) minimising the impact of building sites by optimising the working day, carrying out noisy work as far as possible between

- 9 a.m. and 7 p.m. and limiting night work as far as possible to non-noisy tasks;
- 6) allowing work to be carried out at night when there is no impact on residents;
- 7) ensuring that building site working hours are respected.

### **Recommendation 20**

*Create silent areas and moments  
in all living environments (home, schools, workplaces, etc.) to protect health*

Whereas, according to experts, noise, particularly in schools and workplaces, has significant effects on health, causing stress, sleep disorders and cardiovascular disease;

Whereas, according to noise experts, night-time rest is crucial to health;

The deliberative committee recommends:

- 1) creating quiet rest areas in schools and workplaces;
- 2) encouraging employers to allow workers to benefit from moments of silence during the working day;
- 3) introducing breaks for silence and rejuvenation, tailored to different sectors (schools, offices, etc.);
- 4) asking the federal authority:
  - a) to abolish night flights over the Brussels-Capital Region;
  - b) to ban the noisiest aircraft;
  - c) to apply the principles of protecting the most densely populated areas.

### **Recommendation 21**

*Ensure respectful relations between catering establishments, noisy establishments, organisers of noisy events or activities and local residents*

Whereas catering establishments and noisy establishments are located in residential areas and their noise may disturb local residents;

Whereas, in the case of many noisy events and activities (festivities, nightclubs, etc.), neither the organisers nor the users live in the neighbourhood concerned; local residents are therefore at a loss because they have no direct contact;

The deliberative committee recommends:

- 1) ensuring that housing is located in the right place when considering planning applications;
- 2) ensuring the appropriate geographical location of catering establishments and noisy establishments when considering planning applications and informing local residents by posting notices, distributing information leaflets, etc;
- 3) requiring operators of catering establishments, noisy establishments and organisers of noisy events and activities to contact and talk to local residents, with the help of a municipal facilitator;
- 4) relaunching the 'Happy Ears' campaign and displaying pictograms at the entrances to establishments;
- 5) signing charters for living together in order to establish or re-establish communication between the various parties;
- 6) providing operators and organisers with more training and information about their responsibilities in terms of noise when issuing a permit;

7) ensuring that operators and organisers comply with the regulations, carrying out checks and, if necessary, imposing penalties.